

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8974

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL QUEBEC

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJ: MOOD OF MONTREAL NON-PQ FRANCOPHONES

1. "ALL FRENCH-QUEBECKERS ARE NATIONALISTS -- IT'S THE ONLY WAY THEY HAVE SURVIVED FOR 200 YEARS -- BUT NOT, FOR THE MOST PART, SEPARATISTS." THIS WAS THE OPENING REMARK OF FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER JEANNE SAUVE DURING AN INFORMAL TALK ON "QUEBEC TODAY." IT EPITOMIZES THE DIFFICULTY ANY NON-FRENCH QUEBECKER FACES IN TRYING TO DESCRIBE MEANINGFULLY FRANCOPHONE ATTITUDES IN THIS COSMOPOLITAN AND SUBSTANTIALLY BICULTURAL MILIEU OF MONTREAL AT A TIME OF GREAT AMBIVALENCE ON ALL SIDES.

2. A SENSE OF EXHILARATION WAS APPARENT IN EVEN THE MOST FEDERALIST-ORIENTED FRANCOPHONES AFTER THE ELECTION OF THE PARTI QUEBECOIS IN NOVEMBER. FORMAL RELEASE FROM AN INFERIORITY COMPLEX MANY WOULD NOT HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED, OR PERHAPS DID NOT CONSCIOUSLY FEEL, SWEEPED OVER THE CITY. A LONG-TIME SUPPORTER OF THE FEDERAL LIBERAL PARTY SAID TO THE CG "YOU (GENERALLY) UNDERSTAND US, WHICH IS WHY I HAVE ALWAYS FELT COMFORTABLE WITH AMERICANS WHILE HATING THE ENGLISH." YET SHE AND OTHER SUCH PEOPLE, ALTHOUGH BUOYED BY THE NATIONALISM OF WHICH MINISTER
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SAUVE SPOKE, ARE SORELY BESET WITH CONFLICTING EMOTIONS AND HARD PUT TO FIND MEANS OF RECONCILING THEIR QUEBEC NATIONALISM, THEIR CANADIANISM, AND THEIR BICULTURALISM.

3. THIS IS EVIDENT ON EVERY FRONT, INCLUDING BUSINESS. A PROMINENT FRANCOPHONE BANK PRESIDENT TOLD US THAT, ALTHOUGH IN BOARDROOMS AND AT PRIVATE LUNCHEES BUSINESSMEN SEEM TO BE NATURAL ALLIES

AND TO VIEW GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS (E.G. THE LANGUAGE BILL) THE SAME WAY, "WHEN YOU SCRATCH THEM, ONE IS STILL FRENCH AND THE OTHER ENGLISH AND THERE IS NO WAY THEY CAN HAVE THE SAME EMOTIONAL REACTION."

4. DESPITE THESE TRIBAL INSTINCTS -- AND DESPITE OVER-REACTIVE VILIFICATION BY PQ LEADERS AND EARLIER CONCERNS EXPRESSED TO US ABOUT REPRISALS -- MODERATE FRANCOPHONES ARE STILL SPEAKING OUT. (IN RESPONSE TO CRITICISM OF THE LANGUAGE BILL BY THE CONSEIL DU PATRONAT, MINISTER LAURIN CHARACTERIZED ITS PRESIDENT, PIERRE DES MARAIS, AS "A NEGRO KING IN THE PAY OF ANGLOPHONE BOSSES," AND SAID CLAUDE RYAN OF LE DEVOIR WAS CRITICAL BECAUSE, IF SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION SUCCEEDS, "HE WILL LOSE HIS ROLE OF INTERPRETER OF QUEBEC TO ANGLOPHONES AND HIS ROLE OF INTERPRETER OF ENGLISH CANADA TO FRANCOPHONES." INTERESTINGLY, HE HAS NOT, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, SIMILARLY ATTACKED PAUL DESMARAIS, CHAIRMAN OF POWER CORPORATION, FOR LIKE COMMENTS ON THE POTENTIAL ECONOMIC DAMAGE FROM THE LANGUAGE BILL.)

5. NONETHELESS, MUCH OF THE BATTLE OVER ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EFFECTS OF THIS LEGISLATION HAS BEEN LEFT TO THE ANGLOPHONES, WHICH TENDS TO POLARIZE REACTION AND LESSEN ATTENTION TO THE SPECIFIC ISSUES INVOLVED.

6. SINCE THE FRANCOPHONES CANNOT (NOR, AT THIS POINT, DO MOST ANGLOPHONES) ARGUE WITH THE CONCEPT OF PRIMACY OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE, THEIR ANGUISH IS MORE REFLECTED IN OTHER AREAS. FRENCH FRIENDS HAVE SAID "IF THERE IS VIOLENCE, IT WILL BE AMONG THE FRENCH -- NOT BETWEEN THE FRENCH AND THE ENGLISH." (ON THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OTHER HAND, ONE HEARS IN MIDDLE-CLASS ANGLOPHONE CIRCLES THAT BLUE-COLLAR ANGLOPHONES ARE SO UP-TIGHT ABOUT THEIR INABILITY TO MOVE, AS THE WEALTHY CAN, AND SO FRIGHTENED OF THEIR DIMINISHING PROSPECTS IN AN INCREASINGLY-FRANCOPHONE MILIEU THAT THEY ARE "IN THE MOOD TO RESORT TO GUNS.")

7. ANOTHER MANIFESTATION IS FOUND IN OUR IMMIGRANT VISA SECTION. THE EARLY POST-ELECTION SURGE IN DEMAND FOR VISAS WAS FROM "ETHNIC" AND ANGLOPHONE APPLICANTS. SINCE FEBRUARY, THE FRANCO-PHONE PROPORTION OF OUR INVESTOR APPLICANTS HAS RISEN TO MORE THAN TEN PERCENT OF THE TOTAL AND IS GROWING DAILY.

8. THERE ARE OTHER REFLECTIONS, SUCH AS A RECENT FRANCOPHONE-SIGNED LETTER TO THE EDITOR CLAIMING THAT THE PQ ADMINISTRATION AND EMPHASIS ON INDEPENDENCE IS BRINGING OUT ALL THE "CLOSET CANADIANS." A RECENT POLL, NOW RUNNING IN THE PRESS, INDICATES THAT "EXTREME SEPARATISTS" VIEW THE ISSUE LESS AS PROTECTION OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE THAN OF ECONOMIC DOMINATION -- AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY WANT THE LATTER FOR THEMSELVES. ACCORDING TO

THE POLLSTERS, NOT NLY DO THEY VIEW ANGLOPHONE BILINGUALISTS WITH THE SUSPICION THAT THE LATTER ARE INTERESTED ONLY IN A CONTINUING "DOMINATION" OF THE ECONOMY, THEY ARE THEMSELVES TO A GREAT EXTENT ALREADY BILINGUAL BUT DO NOT WISH OTHER FRANCOPHONES TO BECOME SUCH, THUS ELIMINATING COMPETITION FOR THE BETTER JOBS FROM BOTH SIDES. THIS IS A THOUGHT AS UPSETTING TO THE MODERATE BILINGUAL FRANCOPHONE AS TO THE BILINGUAL ANGLOPHONE.

9. WITHOUT QUESTION, THE MOOD OF THE CITY HAS CHANGED IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS, FROM BUOYANT TO BLAH. THE SLIGHT SENSE OF RENEWED CONFIDENCE -- OR, AT LEAST, INCREASED DETERMINATION TO STAY AND TO WIN -- THAT ONE SENSES IN THE ANGLOPHONE COMMUNITY IS LESS APPARENT AMONG WELL-TO-DO FRANCOPHONES. THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE EROSION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES, ABOUT THE "SOCIALISM" OF THE PQ GOVERNMENT, AND ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING GHETTOIZED,
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DESPITE THEIR BETTER JUDGMENT, BY THE MILITANTS.

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AMCONSUL QUEBEC

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10. FEARS AND ASPIRATIONS WILL PROBABLY COME INTO BETTER FOCUS IN THE NEXT TWO-THREE MONTHS, DURING WHICH THERE WILL BE: FEDERAL BYELECTIONS; A PQ POLICY CONVENTION; SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS;

DEBATES ON AND POSSIBLE PASSAGE OF THE LANGUAGE BILL. THE LIBERALS LOOK REASONABLY SAFE IN THE BYELECTIONS, BUT THERE WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT PQ VOTE FOR OPPOSITION PARTIES IN THE EFFORT TO EMBARRASS PM TRUDEAU AND THE GOC. THE PARTY CONVENTION MAY PROVIDE BETTER INSIGHTS INTO RELATIVE STRENGTHS OF THE PQ MODERATES AND MILITANTS, NOT ONLY WITH RESPECT TO LANGUAGE AND INDEPENDENCE BUT, MORE PARTICULARLY, THE SOCIAL PROGRAMS OF THE NEW QUEBEC GOVERNMENT. SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN NONPARTISAN, BUT MANY MONTREALERS ARE CONCERNED BY THE NUMBER OF PQ SUPPORTERS SEEKING SEATS ON THE BOARDS THIS YEAR BECAUSE OF THE PARTY POLICY OF CENTRALIZING IN A FRENCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THE PRESENT SECTARIAN (AND LINGUISTIC) CATHOLIC FRENCH AND ENGLISH AND PROTESTANT ENGLISH AND FRENCH BOARDS AS WELL AS A PROSPECTIVE REDUCTION IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THERE IS ACCOMMODATION (ON BOTH SIDES) ON THE ISSUE OF THE LANGUAGE BILL ITSELF IS SELF-EVIDENTLY BASIC IN THIS REGARD.

11. MEANWHILE, THE CONFUSION, THE DICHOTOMIES, THE UNEASINESS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WILL CONTINUE TO PLAGUE THIS COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES -- MOST PARTICULARLY, PERHAPS, THAT ELEMENT WHICH IS FRENCH. HARPER

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